Government of Alberta

# Records Management Program Review Action Plan (2003 – 2006)

Developed by:
Alberta Government Services
Information Management Branch

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The records management program was established in the Government of Alberta (GoA) in the mid 1970's. Since then it has achieved many successes. Programs are in place in all ministries. The Alberta Records Centre effectively houses inactive records and coordinates disposition. And several of our guidelines and practices have been used by many jurisdictions as models.

Like other jurisdictions, however, Alberta's program faces many ongoing challenges. The changing nature of records and recordkeeping that has resulted from the advances of information technology is a major one. As too are resources.

In recognition of the changing nature of records and information, the GoA has embarked upon the development of an Information Management Framework (IMF) to ensure that information is treated and managed like other strategic government assets. It is recognized that Records Management (RM) is part of the foundation – without a strong RM program, Information Management will likely not succeed.

In late 2001, the Alberta Records Management Committee (ARMC) initiated a comprehensive Records Management Program Review to ensure the records management program meets the needs of the twenty-first century. The Review was completed in June 2002 by a consulting organization, the Information Management Specialists.

The consultant's report contained 30 recommendations under the following six (6) key themes:

1. Managing Records on all Media: The Transition
2. Governance and Accountability
3. Strategic Planning and Levels of Records Management Implementation Across Government
4. The Records Management Community
5. Policies, Procedures and Standards
6. Streamlining Records Retention Scheduling and Disposition

All recommendations are included in Appendix 1.

It must be recognized, however, because of both budget and human resource limitations, that all recommendations cannot be implemented at once and may need to be refined or modified to be implemented. A manageable phased-in plan has been developed that meshes with the establishment and implementation of the Information Management Framework and other corporate priorities.

Some key considerations in this action plan are as follows:

- The Information Management Branch (IMB), the Alberta Corporate Service Centre (ACSC) and the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) are committed to working together to improve coordination. Monthly meetings have been established to facilitate communications and to vet deliverables prior to ARMC review;
- All major cross-ministry initiatives and corporate IT initiatives will be continuously reviewed to ensure records management linkages are established where needed;
- Alberta will custom build as little as possible – international, national and industry standards and practices will be adopted where feasible;
- Alberta will partner and collaborate with other jurisdictions and levels of government; and
- Alberta Government Services will be used where possible to model, pilot and test new records management developments.

The following multi-year action plan reflects the key themes of the recommendations and initiatives have been flagged with colour codes to reflect:

- Those in progress
- Those starting next
- Those commencing in 2003/04 or later

The consultant's recommendations were approved in principle and this action plan was endorsed by the Alberta Records Management Committee in February 2003. It will be revised regularly as part of the budget planning process.

## 2. ACTION PLAN

### 1. Managing Records on All Media: The Transition

The consultants observed that while paper and hard copy records and databases were being managed, electronic records for the most part were not and that the records management community was not sufficiently involved in IT developments to ensure this management occurs. To address the consultant's nine recommendations, the following action is planned:

- A strategic plan for the records management program of the GoA will be developed that meshes with the strategic direction of the Information Management Framework and its corporate projects and priorities. The plan will ensure that electronic records management is a major integral component. This plan will be vetted and marketed with the two key councils – the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council and the Administrative Services Council;

- A focus on electronic records management (ERM) will also commence immediately. A small scale pilot project in the Information Management, Access and Privacy Division of Alberta Government Services will be completed to:
  - enable IMB staff to gain sufficient expertise and experience in ERM issues;
  - establish a "proof of concept" site to enable demonstration of how electronic records can be effectively managed; and
  - develop preliminary guidance/best practices for use by ministries.
- Concurrently, as part of the Information Management Framework, an Electronic Records and Document Management (ER/EDMS) initiative will establish a strategy for the Government of Alberta and a business case for review/approval by the CIO Council, the Administrative Services Council and the Deputy Ministers Council;
- If approved and funded, a number of supporting elements will begin and will be completed over several years, including:
  - functional requirements;
  - technology evaluation;
  - policies, standards, guidelines and best practices;
  - an implementation approach/framework; and
  - education and training; and
  - a digital archives strategy;
- IMB is represented on a review committee of the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) that is developing evidentiary standards for electronic records. Upon completion, these new standards will be presented and discussed with the various communities of practice (records, legal, IT) and with the CIO Council;
- Work is currently underway with Innovation and Science to consider records and information management requirements in the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA) to ensure recordkeeping is considered in systems development initiatives; and
- In addition, records and information management planning requirements need to be assessed in the corporate IT planning process. This will be completed and other opportunities to forge alliances and linkages will be explored.

## 2. Governance and Accountability

The consultants have observed that the governance and accountability and related roles and responsibilities for records management are not clear, especially since the creation of ACSC, and these elements need to be clarified and strengthened. The following action is planned:

- To review and strengthen the role of the ARMC from being a body that predominantly approves schedules to a body that also reviews and recommends policy and solutions to strategic issues;
- To heighten the visibility of the records management program through increased usage of both the CIO Council and the Administrative Services Council to discuss and vet directions;
- As part of the roll-out of the Information Management Framework and the designation of an "executive champion" for IM in each ministry, to review the current Senior Records Officer designation and the related roles/responsibilities to ensure the strategic components related to records management are dealt with by the ministries and the roles in respect to ACSC are clarified;
- To recognize that, in the current and emerging electronic records era, recordkeeping functions are moving from records management specialists to all employees and as such, through the IM Framework
  - to develop IM competencies for all government staff and,
  - to develop and implement a "Managing Information @ Work" awareness program to foster employee understanding; and
- To fully review records management governance in the longer term to determine if the Records Management Regulation requires amendment or whether it is necessary and feasible to develop an Information Management Act.

## 3. Strategic Planning and Levels of Records Management Implementation Across Government

The consultants have identified a need for a strategic plan and the need to ensure that resources are provided in order to support records management implementation by the ministries. This has been addressed in item 1.

Other action is planned as follows:

- To recommend that the ARMC adopt the ISO15489 Records Management Standard as the foundation for GoA records management program and to promote that ministries assess/benchmark their programs against it;
- To identify current models and best practices used by ministries and to encourage
  - sharing with others at SRO Forums and other venues;
  - use in the development of Government of Alberta policies, guidelines and practices (see item 5).

## 4. The Records Management Community

The consultants have made several recommendations designed to enhance the skills and expertise of the records management community in the GoA to meet the needs of the electronic records era and the emerging information management environment. The following action is planned:

- To continue to convene regular networking meetings/forums with the government records management community to foster information exchange and to continue to develop and enhance the Information Management web site as a state of the art communications tool
- To complete records management competency profiles and to continue to refine and validate them as electronic records and document management strategies are implemented;
- To establish a training plan to rebuild the records management training program using a competency-based approach integrated with the development of policy, standards and best practices (see item 5) and the needs identified in the ER/EDMS initiative (see item1);
- To subsequently re-build the records management training program;
- To inventory and identify formal post-secondary and other external records management training programs and professional certification designations, such as the Certified Records Manager (CRM) and the Certified Document Imaging Architect (CDIA) designations, in order to assess the applicability for GoA positions and employees and to promote and encourage participation;
- To liaise with the Personnel Administration Office and the Human Resources Directors Council about the adoption of records management competencies and the potential review of records management positions; and
- To continue to support the Alberta records management profession and the professional endeavors of ARMA International including meetings, seminars and workshops and Records and Information Management Month events.

## 5. Policies, Procedures and Standards

The consultants observed that the GoA records management program needs policies, standards and guidance at a corporate level, because of the continuous nature of government reorganization, and that these practices need to be developed collaboratively and implemented consistently. The following action is planned:

- To inventory and review relevant international, national and industry records and information management standards for potential adoption or modification by the GoA;
- To establish a comprehensive methodology and model for the development and implementation of recordkeeping systems in the GoA including functional analysis, classification/taxonomy design and schedule development;
- To develop a corporate classification/taxonomy and schedule for administrative/common records to replace the Administrative Records Disposition Authority (ARDA), ensuring appropriate linkages with GAEA; and
- To develop models, guides and/or best practices as follows:
  - a vital records guide;
  - a model records management policy;
  - a model strategic plan; and
  - a glossary of terms.

In addition, under the Information Management Framework, a number of standards, guides and best practices will be developed to support the records management community including:

- metadata standards;
- access/confidentiality standards and routine disclosure guidance;
- Internet content management practices;
- electronic records and document management practices; and
- policies and practices to enable management of information generated in electronic transactions.

Others may be added to this list as the IM Framework evolves.

## 6. Streamlining Records Retention Scheduling and Disposition

The scheduling and disposition process continues to be a source of concern. ARMC is concerned about the quality of schedules to enable it to make decisions; the Provincial Archives is concerned about the quality of schedules to enable it to do archival appraisals; and ministries as well as ACSC staff are concerned about the timeliness of archival appraisals and schedule review/approval to enable them to cope with the disposition of high volumes of records. The forthcoming move of the Provincial Archives is a major factor in these considerations.

The following action is planned:

- To continue to streamline scheduling and disposition processes through the ongoing review and enhancement of both the Records Scheduling System (RSS) and the Inactive Records Information System (IRIS);
- To develop, in the short term, an interim guide/scheduling checklist to assist ministries in scheduling;
- For IMB, ACSC and PAA to review the scheduling process to determine if a system of "triage" is possible to fast track minor amendments to schedules and other potential improvements;
- To provide comprehensive schedule guidance and training in the longer term (see item 5); and
- To assess the need to fully implement the review and improvement of all schedules and to establish an achievable implementation strategy.

| CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS | |
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| **1.** | **Managing Records on All Media: The Transition** |
| 1.1 | The ARMC should review existing practices, develop a strategic direction, and make recommendations regarding a government-wide records management program and related resourcing issues to the Minister of Government Services. |
| 1.2 | The ARMC should work with related committees and councils to raise the awareness of the complexity of the records management issues facing the Government of Alberta and the potential impact and risks of records created, stored and accessed on a wide-variety of media. |
| 1.3 | The ARMC should develop a strategic direction, and make recommendations regarding records on all media in conjunction with the IM Framework Committee and the CIO Council. |
| 1.4 | The central agencies should work with the CIO's Office and the ministries to identify electronic records issues and develop an electronic records management strategy to complement the IM Framework which can be implemented at all levels across government ministries. |
| 1.5 | IMB should work with the ministries and the CIO's Office to develop and implement records management procedures to ensure that records meet the electronic records requirements of the Electronic Transactions Act and the Alberta Evidence Act. |
| 1.6 | The records management community should participate on both steering and working committees at both the ministry and government-wide levels to ensure that records management requirements are built into any new technology initiatives in light of the requirements in the Alberta Evidence Act and the Electronic Transactions Act. |
| 1.7 | IMB should develop a pilot project to test the current standards and guidelines that have been developed to support electronic record keeping practices in the GoA. |
| 1.8 | As more and more records are created electronically and not printed to paper, the Provincial Archives of Alberta should develop a program to acquire electronic records and address long term access and preservation issues. |
| 1.9 | Representatives from IMB and the records management community should be essential partners with and participants in initiatives, which impact records management. These should include:<br>• Access and Privacy;<br>• Information Security;<br>• Electronic Transactions/e-commerce;<br>• Business Resumption Planning;<br>• Service Alberta;<br>• Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture. |

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| **2.** | **Addressing Governance and Accountability** |
| 2.1 | The ARMC should work with the central agencies and Deputy Ministers to promote a government-wide approach to managing records throughout their lifecycle, to raise the awareness of records management issues and ensure that resources are available to meet the increasing records management demands throughout the GoA. |
| 2.2 | The ARMC should work more closely with related committees and councils to further the awareness of the complexity of the records management issues facing the GoA where records are created, stored and accessed on a wide variety of media. |
| 2.3 | The creation of an Information Management Act should be considered to ensure that records and information resources are managed to support government transparency, governance and accountability. An Information Management Act would ensure that all ministries manage their information assets within a legislative infrastructure, where requirements exist for the integrity and reliability of electronic records. |
| 2.4 | The SRO designation should be eliminated and a position created at a management level within each ministry, with accountability and responsibility for issues resolution, strategy development, records retention and disposition schedule review and signoff, and overall liaison with the central agencies. The position should be aligned with the Information Management "executive champion" position recommended in the IM Framework. |
| 2.5 | Government employees should be made aware of their responsibility for managing corporate records as part of their performance contract. |
| **3.** | **Strategic Planning for the Corporate and Ministry Programs** |
| 3.1 | The ARMC should sponsor a project to develop a strategic plan to assist the records management community and its strategic partners to develop a plan of action for records management within the GoA. |
| 3.2 | The ISO Records Management Standard 15489 should be used as a base from which to develop the program elements required in the strategy and to benchmark existing records management program delivery. |
| **4.** | **Developing the Records Management Community** |
| 4.1 | The competency profiles being developed by IMB should be used as the basis for records management reclassifications and, for training and recruiting, once adopted within the Government. |
| 4.2 | The records management job classifications should be updated to reflect current job functions and responsibilities, and changing skill competency requirements in the electronic workplace. |
| 4.3 | Where gaps are identified in the skill sets, IMB should work with training specialists and educational institutions (NAIT, Grant MacEwan) to ensure that the types of skills required are covered in training and education programs for both current and future records management professionals. |
| 4.4 | Records management staff should be trained in electronic records management at appropriate levels to meet the demands of their records management job functions. |

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| **5.** | **Establishing Policies, Procedures and Standards to Assist Ministries and to Foster Consistency** |
| 5.1 | The ministries and the central agencies should work together to identify current records management initiatives and develop best practice models. This will promote consistency among initiatives, and ensure that they can be linked to ministry plans and the IM Framework. Such an initiative will ensure that there is "buy-in" from all the parties involved to support records management project prioritization, identify resource requirements and to ensure a coordinated, consistent approach to implementation. |
| 5.2 | The CGSB E-Evidence standard should be adopted and implemented to meet the Electronic Transactions Act and the Evidence Act requirements to ensure integrity, reliability and authenticity of electronic records and the systems, which create them. |
| 5.3 | Several government agencies (the National Archives of Australia and the Public Records Office in Great Britain) have addressed similar challenges to those faced by the GoA and have published their standards and procedures on their websites. These programs should be reviewed and "best practices" adapted and combined with GoA initiatives as appropriate. |
| 5.4 | The GoA should propose that the development of a "Canadian Business/Functional Classification Model" be considered by the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Archives and Records Management Councils to build on existing work at the federal and provincial levels. |
| 5.5 | The GoA should develop a model classification scheme, which can provide the basis for file plans and retention schedule development and applied to records on all media. |
| **6.** | **Streamlining Records Retention Scheduling and Disposition** |
| 6.1 | The GoA should develop a functional classification scheme and records retention and disposition schedule for common records to replace the Administrative Records Disposition Authority (ARDA), which is used by all ministries. The proposed scheme would identify both business functions and record series and would consolidate information from existing sources such as ARDA, the draft Common Records Disposition Schedule (CRDS), the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture (GAEA) project and the automated Retention Scheduling System. |
| 6.2 | A "handy guide" should be developed on how to develop records retention and disposition schedules; what information should be included, examples of "best schedule". |
| 6.3 | IMB should co-develop with ACSC and PAA a training session on records retention and disposition schedule development. |
| 6.4 | Optional approaches to the retention schedule development and approval process should be considered. |
| 6.5 | The archival appraisal process should be reviewed to determine what impact it has on the retention scheduling process and if it can be streamlined to address both the archival and records management needs. |